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14 October 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Guidelines for Historical Writing in the
Clandestine Services

There is need for a more systematic effort to record historically the development of the Agency, its contributions to national policy and national strength, its experiences with organizational and methodological innovations, and its relations with policy authorities, other agencies, and other intelligence services. Any writing at all along these lines that can be done in the divisions and staffs, from available administrative and operational papers, to undocumented individual memoirs, and even to a tracing of T/O changes, will be of value to Agency historians of this and future generations. The following suggestions, however, are offered as a guide toward the most useful contributions per effort expended.

1. Subject Matter

Functional development: how did we get -- as an agency, or its program in some particular country -- to the present point from the low of 1946? What were the biggest steps, and how did they emerge one from another or from external prompting? Have we sometimes been diverted from our proper function (overt programs)?

Operations: What have the major programs been? How successful was each? How much a contribution to fulfillment of the Agency's job? To national objectives? What went wrong in the failures? What individual operations have been particularly significant, or instructive?

Organization: How have organizational problems (OSO-OPC; overt-covert support functions; the play between geographical and functional units) been solved, or not solved? What experiments failed to work, and why?

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Problems and methods: What innovations have been made in methods (agent communications, proprietary enterprises, the extension of deep cover)? What problems were they intended to solve? How well have they worked, or why didn't they work? What administrative or support problems have been particularly significant?

Relationships of all kinds: What effect have ups and downs of policy guidance (NSC/White House, OCB/Special Group) had? What have been the relations with State and Defense at Headquarters? With ambassadors, armed service commanders, and other U.S. agencies in the field? With "friendly" foreign services? How did the closer working relationships with DDI components evolve?

2. Matters of Form and Method

Presentation: Normally these facets of subject matter should be woven into a chronological narrative, not separated out in analytical fashion, though sometimes it is desirable to interrupt the narrative to trace the history of a particular problem. A table summarizing the chronology is useful for quick reference. Style: the simpler and less pretentious the better.

Audience: The history is for ourselves, that is DDP/Agency. The more unglossed and unabridged it is the more useful it will be. But matters of particular sensitivity from the viewpoint of the security of current operations can be treated by reference to closely held annexes, and the cryptonym/pseudonym cloak may be imposed when necessary.

Actors: It should not be impersonal; it is people that make history. But it should not be cluttered with names that are just names. Bring the main characters to life if you can without fictionalizing.

Documentation: Assemble copies of the most important documents in an appendix. Cite other documentary authority in footnotes, indicating in whose files and under what heading the papers can be found.

Sources: The historian usually begins by getting all he can out of documentary records and then tries to go behind the documents, as well as fill in between them, with carefully chosen questions posed to witnesses. Such inter-

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views should be recorded and cited like other documents. The historian of recent events can reverse this procedure, getting the story from eye-witnesses first and then checking and supplementing it with documents, if he has too little first-hand knowledge of the subject to get started or if the people are better available than the papers. Sometimes periodic reports (to the NSC, the President's Board, the DCI, or others) are useful as summaries pointing to other sources.

Contact [REDACTED]
for further information.
Historical Staff, O/DCI
Room 1D27
Phone 5963

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